

**Press Release**  
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**Women's Progress is Human Progress and Human Progress is Women's Progress**  
By Hillary Rodham Clinton

Fifteen years ago, delegates from 189 countries met in Beijing for the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women. It was a call to action to the global community to work for the laws, reforms, and social change necessary to ensure that women and girls everywhere have the opportunities to fulfill their God-given potential and contribute to the progress and prosperity of their societies.

Women around the world answered that call.

At this moment, in cities and villages and countries and continents, women are running domestic violence shelters and fighting human trafficking. They are rescuing girls from brothels in Cambodia, campaigning for public office in Kuwait, healing women injured in childbirth in Ethiopia, running schools for refugees from Burma, and rebuilding homes in the aftermath of the earthquakes in Haiti and Chile. Without recognition or fanfare, and often with little support, women are working to improve the quality of their lives and the lives of all people.

Their efforts are paying off. Today, more girls worldwide are in school. More women hold jobs and serve in public office. And more countries have passed laws recognizing women's equality, although for too many, laws that exist on the books are not yet borne out in their daily lives.

But our progress is far from complete. Women are still the majority of the world's poor, uneducated, unhealthy, and unfed. They are the majority of the world's farmers, but are often forbidden from owning the land they cultivate or accessing credit to make those farms profitable. Women care for the world's sick, but women and girls are less likely to get treatment when they themselves are sick. They rarely cause armed conflicts but they always suffer their consequences and are often excluded from peace negotiations. And violence against women remains a global pandemic.

The status of the world's women is not only a matter of morality and justice. It is also a political, economic, and social imperative. The evidence is irrefutable: when women are

free to develop their talents and contribute fully to their societies, everyone benefits.

When women are free to vote and run for public office, governments are more effective and responsive to their people. When women are free to earn a living and start small businesses, they become drivers of economic growth. When women are afforded the opportunity of education and access to health care, their families and communities prosper. When women have equal rights, nations are more stable, peaceful, and secure.

Advancing women's equality is at the heart of the foreign policy of the United States. We believe that women are critical to solving virtually every challenge we face, and that strategies that ignore the lives and contributions of women have little chance of succeeding. We view the subjugation of women as a threat to the national security of the United States and to the common security of our world. So we are integrating women throughout our work around the globe.

In Afghanistan, the participation of Afghan women in decision-making about the future of their country is critical for sustainable development, better governance and peace. Which is why we have included a Women's Action Plan to promote women's leadership in both the public and private sectors to increase their access to education, health, and justice, and to generate jobs for women, especially in agriculture. In short, women are essential to securing a better future for Afghanistan.

Women are central to our effort to elevate development as a pillar of our foreign policy alongside diplomacy and defense. As those who grow the world's food, collect the water, gather the firewood, and wash the clothes—and increasingly, as those who work in the factories, run the shops, launch new businesses, and create jobs—women are powerful forces for economic growth and social progress.

Women are a focus of three major U.S. foreign policy initiatives now underway.

Our Global Health Initiative is a \$63-billion commitment to improve health and strengthen health systems worldwide, and one of its key priorities is improving maternal and child health.

Our global food security program is a \$3.5-billion commitment to strengthen the world's food supply and its ability to reach markets, so farmers can earn enough to support their families and food can get to all people everywhere – and it is focused on supporting women, who are the majority of farmers in the developing farmer.

In response to the challenge of climate change, the United States has pledged to help mobilize \$100 billion a year by 2020 to address the adaptation and mitigation needs of developing countries. And while all people will feel the effects of climate change, they will fall particularly hard on women in developing countries who often shoulder the responsibility of securing food and fuel for their families. Our plan seeks to empower these women to become part of the solution to this global crisis.

These initiatives reflect a fundamental value of U.S. foreign policy: The world cannot make progress if women and girls are denied their rights and left behind.

Whether we live in New York or New Delhi, Lagos or La Paz, women and girls share many of the same struggles and aspirations. The principle of women's equality is a simple, self-evident truth, but the work of turning that principle into practice is rarely simple. It takes years, even generations, of patient, persistent work to change not only a country's laws but its people's minds—to weave throughout culture and tradition, in public discourse and private views, the unassailable fact of women's worth and women's rights.

In 1995, the world said with one voice that human rights are women's rights and women's rights are human rights. Today, we must say with one voice that women's progress is human progress and human progress is women's progress, once and for all.